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GEOGRAPHICAL REVIEWS

EXPLORATION IN CENTRAL ASIA

AUREL STEIN. **Serindia: Detailed Report of Explorations in Central Asia and Westernmost China.** Vol. 1, xxxix and 547 pp.; ills., bibliogr.; Vol. 2, viii and pp. 549-1088; ills.; Vol. 3, xi and pp. 1089-1580; maps, diagrs., ills., index; Vol. 4, x pp. and 175 pls. 1 portfolio (Vol. 5) with 94 maps. The Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1921. 13½ x 10½ inches.

The most important work upon Central Asia that has appeared in many a day is "Serindia," in which Sir Aurel Stein gives us the long and eagerly awaited report of his explorations, mainly archeological but also to a very considerable extent geographical and ethnological, during his second Central Asian expedition, in 1906-1908. It embraces the full record of two and a half years of arduous but most profitable labor in that region to which French scholars refer as *Sérinde*, between the Pamirs on the west and the Pacific watershed on the east, where the Indian and Chinese cultures have met. The particular period to the study of which the author mainly devoted himself was that relatively brief but intensely interesting one, covering in all but a few centuries, when the Buddhist faith, modified to a certain extent by transmission through the hands of Iranian intermediaries, was being carried across the Central Asiatic regions to China, Korea, and Japan.

The work carries us step by step along the author's route from the time he left the Peshawar border, through his various stages past the southern rim of the Taklamakan to northwestern China proper, and then back by way of the old northern route. For the personal incidents of travel Sir Aurel refers us to his "Ruins of Desert Cathay," which appeared in 1912, and which those not already familiar with it would do well to read in conjunction with "Serindia" in order to get a full conception of the arduous character of the expedition and the hardships and dangers encountered in its course.

The earlier portion of the route by which Sir Aurel proceeded from India to the scene of his labors is of interest for its association with Alexander's career. In this connection the author makes numerous interesting comments; but he holds out little hope (pp. 2 and 4) of the certain identification of many of the more important sites mentioned by historians, such, for example, as Massaga, or the still more famous Aornos. The Indian character of the population found by the Macedonians in the Kabul valley is pointed out—an indication of a very definite shifting toward the Indus, during the past two thousand years, of the linguistic and cultural, if not the actual ethnic, boundary between India and Iran. Perhaps in some way connected with this has been a distinct recession of the Iranian frontier on the east and northeast. One result of the Central Asiatic explorations of the past few years—a result to which Sir Aurel has himself contributed in no small measure—has been to demonstrate the former much greater extension eastward of the Aryan-speaking peoples, even as far as the borders of China proper. It seems to be demonstrated that as far eastward as Khotan and even farther, toward the Tun-huang oasis, forms of Iranian were spoken as late as the eighth century, not dying out completely indeed until about the end of the tenth. What the Iranians have won on the southeast they have lost, and more than lost, in the direction of Central Asia.

The second and third sections of this first chapter give a sketch of that Chinese contact with northwestern India for our knowledge of which we are indebted to the accounts of the travels of Buddhist monks like Fa-hsien, early in the fifth century, and the better-known Hsüan-tsang, in the seventh. Readily comprehensible is Sir Aurel's enthusiasm for the self-devotion and fortitude displayed by these simple Chinese monks in their journeys across the Central Asiatic deserts and mountains to the homeland of their faith; for nowhere and at no time have men displayed greater readiness to undergo privation and danger in their search for the truth.

Chapter 2 offers us (pp. 52 ff.) an account of the eighth-century Chinese conquest of Yasin and Gilgit, a feat which included the crossing of the Pamirs and the Hindukush by an army of 10,000 men and which reflected all the greater credit upon their leader, General Kao Hsien-

chih (his name deserves to be remembered) because of the poor quality and low morale of his troops. The Chinese have more than once shown in the conduct of their military operations among the great mountain masses of Central Asia a genius which makes the crossing of the Alps look like child's play by comparison; witness their invasion of Nepal late in the eighteenth century, when after advancing over two thousand miles from their base, by a road which led across the inhospitable tableland of Tibet, they conquered on its own soil one of the finest fighting nations in India.

In the ninth chapter occur important historical notices on "Lop, Shan-shan, and Lou-lan" (pp. 318 ff.), while the next, entitled "Through the Lop Desert" (pp. 346 ff.) is of especial interest from the geographical point of view. It is worth while noting that in one of the sections of the latter chapter, "Across an Eroded Ancient Delta," as well as here and there elsewhere in the book, one finds recorded the picking up, on wind-eroded surfaces, of stone implements, some of them Neolithic and others possibly, although by no means certainly, Paleolithic. The prehistoric period in Central Asia, less spectacular in the character of its remains than the Buddhist epoch but of vastly greater importance to a proper understanding of the culture development not only of the region itself but also of those adjacent areas between which it has always played the part of a bridge, is one which calls most urgently for investigation. Only thus, for instance, can we hope ever to reach any solution of the beginnings of Chinese civilization.

Chapters 14-20, forming the first seven of the second volume, deal mainly with geographical matters and give us an account of the author's journey from the Lop region eastward to the Tun-huang oasis. These portions of the work tell us much that is entirely new regarding the western end of that old Chinese system of frontier defense which we call comprehensively the "Great Wall." Sir Aurel points out (p. 552) the former importance of Tun-huang as the westernmost outpost of China and the base for her earliest Central Asian operations. The third section of Chapter 14 contains some interesting remarks upon Marco Polo's journey through these same regions, while in Chapter 20 is described the identification of the site of the famous Yü-mên, or "Jade Gate," once the chief frontier town hereabout and the outlet through which passed all traffic with the west by the ancient Lou-lan route, including the export trade in silk to Parthia and the Roman Orient, treated of in the fifth section of this same chapter.

The attainment of one of the main goals of the expedition, the "Caves of the Thousand Buddhas" (Ch'ien-fo-tung), lying a few miles southeast of Tun-huang, is graphically described in the twenty-first chapter, while in the one following, "Exploration of a Walled-up Hoard," is the account of one of the most extraordinary manuscript finds of modern times, in one of the artificial caves of this site. To quote the author's own words, "The sight disclosed within made my eyes open wide. Heaped up in closely packed layers, but without any order, there appeared in the dim light of the priest's flickering lamp a solid mass of manuscript bundles rising to a height of nearly 10 feet. They filled, as subsequent measurement showed, close on 500 cubic feet, the size of the small room or chapel being about 9 feet square and the area left clear within just sufficient for two people to stand in" (p. 808).

Volume 3, the last of the text, has to do with the return journey of Sir Aurel by the old north road, via Hami and Turfan, as far as Kucha, where he took a "short cut," as he calls it, across the Taklamakan desert to Khotan and thence to India and home.

The series of appendixes at the close of the text in this volume consists of essays by various authorities on different portions of the material gathered by Sir Aurel Stein on this expedition and covers no less than 145 pages. As with the text proper, their scope is far too broad to allow of more than a mere sampling of their contents. Appendix C, by T. A. Joyce (pp. 1351-1389) discusses the physical anthropology of Chinese Turkestan and the Pamirs. Following it is a description, by Sir Arthur Church, of specimens of mural painting and plaster from various sites, mainly Buddhist. Appendix E contains three essays by the late Raphael Petrucci, as well as a brief but illuminating sketch by Laurence Binyon (pp. 1428-1431) of the art of the Tun-huang paintings.

The fifty-nine excellent plans of sites, ruins, etc., with which this third volume concludes deserve the highest commendation both for the evident care with which they were drawn up in the field and for the way in which they are presented here.

Of the 345 half tones in the text, all are finely executed and truly illustrative in the best sense; the scenes among the great snow mountains in particular reflect rare credit on the photographer not only for his technical skill but for his artistic sense as well.

The fourth volume contains 175 excellent plates representing finds of every description. A considerable number are in color, the workmanship here being of the same high standard as all else about the book.

The final "volume" is in reality a portfolio of maps, most adequately arranged for convenience of reference. In addition to one general map and an index map (the latter a most useful feature), both on a scale of 1 : 3,000,000, there are ninety-four others on a scale of 1 : 253,440, or 1 inch = 4 miles; many of these are of no little importance geographically.

A most praiseworthy feature is the list of titles on the region under consideration, together with the abbreviations under which they are cited (pp. xxv-xxviii). No less to be commended are the detailed descriptions of finds, inserted in the text as additional sections appended to the chapters with which they have to do; in this way the text is relieved of much detail that would render it distinctly less readable, while at the same time this descriptive material is placed just where it is most convenient for reference. Finally, there is a most excellent index.

Among the many things for which "Serindia" deserves particular approbation is the care taken in the transcriptions of Chinese names. Sir Thomas Wade's system, as exemplified in Gile's Dictionary, is that employed; and, while most students will probably agree that it is far from being an ideal one, it is at least the one best known and most generally used and therefore to that extent the standard, so far as writers in English are concerned. The way in which the transcriptions are accompanied by the corresponding Chinese characters is also deserving of notice and, in so far as possible, of emulation.

It would be difficult to point out any particular in which "Serindia" falls short of being all that a report of this kind should be. Sir Aurel presents the results of his labors in straightforward, succinct fashion, without weaving any theories or engaging in polemics of any sort. He has, furthermore, the happy gift, whether he is writing a personal narrative or compiling a formal scientific report, of knowing how to be vivid and interesting as well as painstaking and accurate.

C. W. BISHOP

ANCIENT CULTURAL RELATIONS BETWEEN CHINA AND IRAN

BERTHOLD LAUFER. *Sino-Iranica: Chinese Contributions to the History of Civilization in Ancient Iran, with Special Reference to the History of Cultivated Plants and Products.* iv and pp. 185-630; indexes. *Field Museum of Nat. Hist. Publ. 201 (Anthropol. Ser., Vol. 15, No. 3).* Chicago, 1919.

As we all know, the success achieved by Dr. Laufer in the past two decades and more in throwing light upon Far Eastern culture development has placed him in the foremost rank among students in that field. His recent work, "Sino-Iranica," fully maintains the high standard of scholarship which he has set for himself, and for others as well, along those lines.

The object of the book, the author tells us (p. 207), is "to present . . . a synthetic and comprehensive picture of a great and unique plant-migration in the sense of a cultural movement, and simultaneously . . . to determine the Iranian stratum in the structure of Chinese civilization." In the pursuance of this aim no less than one hundred and thirty-five subjects are treated of. These are concerned mainly, as the subtitle informs us, with the diffusion of various cultivated plants. Such things, however, as Persian textiles and Iranian minerals, metals, and precious stones are also discussed; while a section is devoted to the titles employed by the Sassanian Government, and another to the cultural debt owed by the Persians to China.

In connection with his plant studies Dr. Laufer lays special emphasis upon the historical fact, so often ignored by later writers both native and foreign, that the great Chinese traveler, Chang K'ien, who first established a direct and conscious contact between his own land and western Asia, brought back with him two new plants and only two, viz., alfalfa and the vine (p. 190 and *passim*). The point is further made (pp. 220 ff.) that there can have been but one center for the origin of grape growing and that viticulture and wine making and the use of alfalfa as well were found by the Chinese among Aryan-speaking peoples and not at all among the Turks.

Another interesting and significant fact pointed out (p. 293) is that one of the fundamental differences between the Chinese and the Mediterranean civilizations was the use of hemp by